Thomas Gillespie

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I.

THERE may be some here this afternoon in a state of uncertainty as to the identity of the man of whom I am going to speak. For the Gillespies who have made some contribution to the history of the Church of Scotland are not to be numbered on the fingers of one hand. Apart from Dr. John Gillespie of Mouswald—moderator of the Church of Scotland in 1903—an authority on Galloway cattle, popularly known in my youth as " the Minister for Agriculture ", and William Gillespie, Kells, who was the last minister I know of, to be penalised for his prayers in public worship, since he persisted in praying for Queen Caroline, after her husband (George IV) and the government had disowned her, there are four with more permanent claims to fame. In my student days, the most familiar was William Honyman Gillespie who, seventy years before, had made several contributions to the philosophy of religion—extremely significant in his own esteem. They centred round the *a priori* argument for the existence of God. To ensure that they should not be forgotten he founded a Trust for their re-publication from one generation to another. There being no appreciable public demand for them in the open market, the Trust fulfilled its obligations by presenting copies to the Divinity Halls and Colleges, and no student of my time finished his course without having three, or at least, two copies of these volumes on his shelves. I must confess I never read more than a few pages, and, judging by the number of second-hand copies on the twopenny book stalls before the war, and their state of preservation, I cannot have been alone in this.

The earliest of the others was George the " Great Mr. Gillespie " whose portrait is one of the treasures of this college—the ablest and most voluminous pamphleteer of the 1640's, whom his contemporaries regarded as the hero of the Westminster Assembly debates, but whose name Milton hardened into Galasp—a name, he claimed, " that would have made Quintilian stare and gasp." (Sonnet XI.) Without doubt the most acute, most learned, and most militant Presbyterian of his own time, or indeed any time, his works have fitly been republished as the first two of the three volumes of the *Presbyterian's Armoury*. One cannot but admire this youthful prodigy of learning. He died at 35, just after his moderatorship

of the General Assembly—the youngest moderator, I believe, that the Church of Scotland or any considerable branch of it, ever had. But, personally I feel more drawn to his three colleagues. He lacked the wide interest of Robert Baillie, the oecumenical spirit of Alexander Henderson, the religious fervour of Samuel Rutherford. He was a born controversialist whose eagle eye missed no slips or deficiencies of his opponents, whether of the right or of the left.

His younger brother, Patrick, made almost an equal mark. Leader and organiser of the Protesters he so commended himself to Cromwell that he made him Principal of Glasgow University, and took him for a time as his main guide in Scottish affairs. But it was in the development of the Covenant Theology that he left his deepest mark. His " The Ark of the Covenant Opened ", published after his death, was a mere fraction of a greater work. A generation later (1701) the Synod of Glasgow was informed that the rest of the original MS. was in existence in London. A committee was immediately appointed to see to its publication. But it never appeared : and there is no clue to the reason why.

Passing by *these* other members of the clan, we come to Thomas the founder of the Relief Church—the man who was destined to work a remarkable change in the religious climate of Scotland. But do we? I happened to mention to a friend in Glasgow that I was working on a paper on Thomas Gillespie. Immediately he answered, " Which ? " On my reply that I only knew of one, he said, " I am surprised." Did I not know of Thomas Gillespie, Professor of Humanity in St. Andrews in the early nineteenth century? I said, " No ! " I never heard of him and why should I be thought likely to be interested in him? He said that he was an assiduous collector of traditions of the Covenanters, and was little known because he did not publish them under his own name, but simply contributed them to collections made and published by men who were supplying the contemporary public appetite for such folk-memories. I found that I had, at an earlier date, read some of them in Nimmo's twelve volume collection, but they had not appealed to me as, in any way, significant, and while this Thomas Gillespie may have been an excellent Professor of Humanity, it did not seem to me that his contributions to religious edification in Scotland justified the query, Which? So I turn to the founder of the Relief Church without any feeling that my bald title may have misled anyone.

My special interest in Thomas Gillespie dates from the autumn of 1907, when I discovered that the congregation of the United Free Church to which I had just been called was originally a Relief foundation, and I was keen to know in advance, all I could learn about its history and its ethos.

I emerged from my reading with the conviction (which I have found nothing since to shake) that, of all the religious denominations of Scotland the Relief Church was the one which had least to repent in its actions—official and non-official. At intervals ever since, I have dipped into the pamphlets of the period. I think I have read now all the relevant contemporary material. But I am not going to attempt a full-length portrait of the man. All I can hope to do in this paper is to begin with a potted biography, such as might be found in a well-informed encyclopaedia ; and then to discuss the two points on which he made a real impact on his own generation and those that immediately followed, and has left *his* mark on the Church of Scotland of today.

Thomas Gillespie, born in 1708, at Clearburn, Duddingston, was the son of a well-to-do brewer and bonnet-laird—the only son of a second marriage. An interview with Thomas Boston, arranged by his mother, turned his thoughts to the ministry. On the completion of his Arts course in Edinburgh, he entered the Divinity Hall. After some months, however, he left for the Divinity Hall of the Secession Church in Perth. A few weeks' experience of its narrowness being more than enough, he betook himself to Northampton to complete his studies under Philip Doddridge. He was ordained by a " classis " of the English Presbyterians. Presented and called to Carnock, he was inducted by the Presbytery of Dunfermline in 1741. In the early years of his ministry he was a leader in the Cambuslang and Kilsyth Revivals, and became a trusted correspondent of George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards. Taking his stand, with the majority of the Presbytery, against the Inverkeithing Intrusion, he was summarily deposed by the General Assembly of 1752. In 1761, with two other ministers and their flocks, he formed a new body—the Presbytery of Relief, which had attained a quite considerable place in many parts of Scotland, by the time of his death in 1774.

II.

The Emergence of a Denomination

The re-imposition of patronage in 1712 opened the door to the many strifes which were to embitter Scottish Church life for almost two hundred years. At first it was exercised cautiously. Patrons were unwilling to present men known to be unacceptable to the parish. When the early conflicts arose the Church was accustomed to insist on an adequate call (which normally meant a majority one) in addition to the presentation before the settlement could be effected. But, gradually, there took place a drift towards acquiescence in patronage. Formal calls by a slender minority came to be accepted. Very frequently, the local Presbytery,

knowing the strength of local feeling, refused to carry out the ordination. In these cases, the Assembly appointed a delegation, popularly called a Riding committee to supersede the local Presbytery for this purpose. Sometimes the Presbytery refused, after such an ordination, to add the intruded minister to its roll. Invariably, after proceedings longer or shorter, the General Assembly gave orders to the Presbytery that this should be done. One of the most protracted cases involved the Presbytery of Dunfermline. Mr. Robert Stark, presented to Kinross, was—after a long process, which contributed not a little to the growth of the Secession —ordained by a Riding committee with the help of the military. It was two full years before he was added, by an order of the General Assembly, to the roll of the Presbytery. Within twenty years, he was one of its majority who consistently refused to take part in intrusions. To the other side, he was one of the most prominent of those whom they named " people-ridden ministers ". And it was this type of case which, among many contributing factors, led to the next step, from compulsory incorporation of intruded ministers to compulsory ordination of them. *The proper subordination of Church judicatories* became one of the watchwords of William Robertson's new Moderatism. It was during the evolution of this slogan that the case of Inverkeithing took place. It was not a specially glaring intrusion. One elder and about 5 per cent. of the heads of families signed the call. And the presentee was a minister quite acceptable in his first parish, and proved in the long run, reasonably acceptable to his new one. But the Presbytery, through the knowledge that 95 per cent. of the parishioners, for reasons praiseworthy or blameworthy, were fixed in their opposition to his settlement, refused to induct him. A protracted case followed. It seemed to be settled by the Commission of Assembly in March 1752, which, recognising the inflexible determination of the Presbytery not to induct, empowered the Synod of Fife to act instead. This was a slap in the face to the " fiery young spirits ", who had already given warning that they meant the Church of Scotland to commit itself to their programme of the proper subordination of Church judicatories. So William Robertson, John Home, Hugh Blair and others entered their dissent, and appealed to the forthcoming General Assembly. They had carefully prepared their reasons of dissent, which were speedily published and broadcast throughout the land, and were later to become the standing orders for the new Moderatism which came to birth in 1752. The implications of the word " proper " were not to appear till action was taken on them.

On the Monday of the General Assembly, the case of Inverkeithing was taken up. No one doubted that the decision of the Commission would be reversed and the Presbytery ordered to induct. But since a quorum of

Presbytery (3) were known to be willing to comply, it was felt that no disastrous results would follow. But no one, outside the inner councils, dreamt of such a drastic motion as would be submitted and carried. It was to the effect that the Presbytery of Dunfermline should meet at Inverkeithing on the following Thursday, and induct the presentee, that the quorum of Presbytery should be raised, for the occasion, to five, and that the whole ministerial members of the Presbytery should appear before the Assembly on the Friday, to report whether or not the deed had been done. On the Thursday, five members of the Presbytery did go to Inverkeithing, but two of them, finding the opposition not weakened, as they had hoped, but strengthened, returned home before the hour of meeting. The three who were left were willing to go on with the induction, but the raising of the quorum dashed the hopes of the presentee. On the Friday, they appeared at the bar of the Assembly, and the recalcitrants were heard in defence of their action. The Assembly then came to its second extraordinary resolution that one of them should be deposed from the ministry to warn any minister who at any future time, might think of following their example, and the others receive some lesser punishment. Why, it may be asked, depose only one ? Why not the whole five ? There are hints in the pamphlets of the time that the motive was the fear that it would present five flourishing congregations and their ministers to the Seceders, which would mean practically abdication in West Fife. So the five were again questioned. Four stood firm. The question was now put. Which of the four should be deposed ? About two-thirds of the Assembly refused to vote. But, of the remaining third the vast majority selected Thomas Gillespie. Why this selection ? The official historian of the Relief Church has no doubts. It was because Thomas Gillespie at his final hearing presented a paper of protest consisting entirely of verbatim extracts from the minutes of former Assemblies, pronouncements against intrusions, and protests against patronage. But I have found hints at least of other two. Of the whole four, he was the one least likely to join the Secession. His flight from the Secession Hall in Perth, and his profound disagreement with the Erskines over George Whitfield, were a guarantee that he would not readily betake himself, or take his congregation, into the Secession fold. The other is this. Gillespie had been ordained in England, the other three by the Church of Scotland. It was felt, illogically enough, that deposition would mean less to him than to them. The Church of Scotland had full right to take away what it had given. The other three would be reduced to the ranks of the layman. But Gillespie might retain some right to continue to exercise his ministry, outwith the bounds of the National Church. The very form of his sentence suggests that this may have been in the mind of the Moderator, for, following the most solemn words of

deposition he added this, " prohibiting and discharging you to exercise the same or any part thereof, *within this Church*, in all time coming." And that Gillespie understood the sentence in this sense—as expulsion rather than deposition—is shown by his immediate reactions. His first words after his return to Carnock late on the Friday night were, " I am no longer minister of Carnock." And on the Sunday morning he would not enter the church, nor even allow its bell to be rung, but preached in the open to an audience somewhat larger than his usual congregation. His hearers increased throughout that summer, and before winter set in they had a meeting house ready for him outwith the bounds of the parish—in Dunfermline. They did little to make it like a church, for all were sure that the anti-moderates would rally all their forces for the next Assembly and reverse the hasty and unjust sentence. The Press teemed with pamphlets, about 10 to 1 in Gillespie's favour. When the General Assembly met in 1753, it was evident that the popular party had secured a majority. They were able to elect one of their own members as moderator. Everything in the outlook seemed auspicious. True, the Lord High Commissioner was evidently determined to thwart their endeavours, expressing the judgement that to repone a man who had not made personal application for such reponement was a thing unheard of. So the Moderates, concentrating on the fact that there had been no move made by Mr. Gillespie himself were able to muster a majority of three. There is little doubt that had the tiny majority been the other way round, Thomas Gillespie would have accepted reponement, and would, as minister of Carnock, have been a strength to the popular party and a thorn in the side of the new moderatism. But he had to continue in Dunfermline, left severely alone, for, even his most ardent supporters within the Church, were afraid to hold open fellowship with one in a state of separation. Left severely alone, even by the Seceders, for he was not willing that he and his congregation should join either the Burgher or the anti-Burgher fold. The nearest approach to success on their part was when, during the protracted vacancy after the death of Ralph Erskine, the Burgher congregation of Dunfermline made tentative and unofficial approaches to him to allow himself to be nominated as his successor. But in vain. So, Thomas Gillespie remained alone, without any ecclesiastical connection.

It was the famous Jedburgh case that reduced this feeling of complete isolation. This congregation had set its heart on a neighbouring minister, Thomas Boston (the younger), of Oxnam. But no amount of pressure would induce the patron to issue a presentation in his favour. The final result was that the magistrates, elders, and congregation built a meeting house in the town, and asked Thomas Boston to be their minister. Demitting office in Oxnam, at the end of 1757, he was inducted into his new

charge, amid great local enthusiasm. So again we have a strong local congregation, but without any ecclesiastical connection.

The most moving incident in the pre-natal history of the Relief was told to me many times in my first charge. It had gathered, then, some of the features of legend. They pictured, in moving words, how Thomas Boston, facing the huge audience in the open air at his first communion in the Anaholm, suddenly realised that he was not alone, that during his opening prayer at his side there had appeared quietly the totally unexpected figure of Thomas Gillespie, all the way from Dunfermline, and that their quiet handshake had raised the whole congregation to the highest pitch of enthusiasm—the truth being that it was not Boston's first communion, but the second; that he had been in correspondence with Thomas Gillespie, who had gladly agreed to come to his help; that Gillespie had been delayed in his journey, and that Boston had to begin the service alone, having given up hope of his appearing. Even so, stripped of the legendary accretions, it was a most moving incident, and began a long and fruitful partnership. From now on, there are two congregations in close fellowship, but not yet a Presbytery, for, on their interpretation of the standards, it required a minimum of three congregations to form a Presbytery.

The third appeared in Fife. It was the presentation to the Parish of Kilconquhar of Dr. Chalmers of Elie, a granduncle of Thomas Chalmers, acquiesced in by a small minority of the parishioners that led to the third. The non-acquiescent majority did not at once secede. They formed several praying-societies. But there was trouble about the baptism of their children. No parish minister would officiate unless the parents brought a certificate from Dr. Chalmers. Dr. Chalmers regularly refused to grant such. On their plight being represented to Thomas Gillespie he, more than once, responded, and conducted services. But Dunfermline was quite a long distance away, in those days of slow transport. So the various praying-societies resolved to amalgamate, and to build a meeting house in the most populated area of the parish, at Colinsburgh. After some unsuccessful ventures in search of a minister, they called a Rev. Thomas Colier, who, though a native of Fife, had been serving the Presbyterian Church in England as a minister in Westmoreland. To conduct the service of admission on October 22, 1761, Thomas Gillespie came from Dunfermline, and Thomas Boston from Jedburgh, with several of their elders, and, in the afternoon, they took a step which must have been the subject of previous correspondence (now lost)—a step which is thus recorded in the minutes: "The same day, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Messrs. Boston, Gillespie, and Colier, with an elder from their respective congregations . . . convened in the meeting-house of Colinsburgh, and by solemn prayer by

Mr. Thomas Gillespie, formed themselves into a Presbytery for the relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges." They do not even mention the Westminster standards and their interpretation of them. Still less did they laboriously produce a Testimony, in which they praise or condemn certain events of their recent or remote past; they take it for granted that they are in the main stream of the Scottish tradition, and that they will act in the future, as they would have acted in the past as ministers of the Church of Scotland had they been free to do so; and all suffering from the new totalitarian regime, whether congregations or ministers, would be welcome to their ranks. They were not prepared to train their future ministers in Relief principles; their candidates for the ministry were to attend the University Divinity Faculties, and share in full the training of those destined for the Church of Scotland ministry. For at least a generation, this was to prove a profitable venture, for few Relief students companied with Church of Scotland ones for the two or three years' requisite without bringing with them one or more recruits for the ministry of the Relief Church.

So many links, indeed, remained with the Church of Scotland, that many casual observers professed to be uncertain whether they were a separate denomination or simply a collection of Chapels of Ease within the general framework of the Establishment.

Surely, never did a denomination emerge anywhere, less tainted by the sin of schism, or even by any spirit of schism, than this Synod of Relief—as it was to become—the three churches of 1761 were to grow into 116 when the Relief Synod joined in 1847 with the United Secession to become the United Presbyterian Church.

But, during the period of emergence, there was a very brisk pamphlet skirmish. There were, as I said, about 10 pamphlets in favour of Gillespie, for every one in defence of the actions of the Church of Scotland. The limits of the "*proper*" subordination of judicatories was the main theme. And the pithiest and most penetrating participant in more than one contribution (with no name attached) was Rev. John Maclaurin, the most highly esteemed among the Scottish theologians since the death of Thomas Boston.

The main pamphlet (pp. 140) has a lengthy title page fully explanatory of its contents: The Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion imposed on the Church of Scotland by a Prevailing Party in the General Assembly, in Opposition to the Great Bulk both of Office-Bearers and private Christians, considered, In some Conferences between two Neighbouring Ministers. Wherein, among other Things, the Reasons of the Dissent from the Commission in March 1752 are fairly examined. With an

Appendix relating to the new Pamphlet call'd, A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, etc., Glasgow. Printed in the year MDCCLIII.

In the Preface he suggests that the action of the Assembly stems from Pope Innocent III. " We, according to the plenitude of our Power, have a Right to dispense with all Right " whereas that of Thomas Gillespie finds its immediate parentage in Richard Baxter " those who are absolutely subjected to God, will obey none *against Him*, cost what it will." A most learned discussion follows on the limits of ecclesiastical obedience, passive and active, in which a multitude of specific cases, in the immediate or remote past, are analysed and resolved. The principles governing their resolution may be reduced to one " An absolute and unlimited obedience is due to God alone, and that any Church which insists on it encroaches upon the rights of the Supreme Being." To yield an unquestioning and an active obedience to any human authority, civil or ecclesiastic is to be guilty of real idolatry—offering to a creature the very highest and most excellent sacrifice that the Creator Himself is capable of receiving from us.

In the course of this discussion, Maclaurin tells a story which I had read more than once before, but never in such a contemporary version, and as it has its bearing on the second half of this paper, I think it well to include it here.

After, at considerable length, detailing the circumstances of the encounter, he goes on thus to the encounter itself, between two English Whigs and an Anglican Divine a survivor of the upholders of the doctrine of Absolute Monarchy, with its concomitant of the most unlimited active obedience.

" One of the Gentlemen thinking to puzzle him by putting Cases asked him 'Whether, if the King should demand the use of his Wife, he would think himself obliged to yield her up? Yes, sir, says he, the fault would be his, not mine': But, says the other, if the King should order you to turn Papist, would you obey him? Yes, sir, says he, I would. What, continued the Gentleman, if he should order you to turn Mahometan? Sir, says the Doctor, I do not know but I might. The Gentleman, hitherto unsuccessful in his Queries, being willing to try whether there was not something that would stagger this Champion, being sure that there was Nobody but would stick at something, at last happened to hit the Nail on the Head. Doctor, says he, I did not imagine you would have carried the point so far. But I beg leave to put one Question more to you. Pray, what if the King should order you to turn Presbyterian, would you obey him in that? This put the Doctor at last to a stand, and having weighed the puzzling case a few Moments, in his own thoughts—between the Credit of his Doctrine, and the

odious idea he had formed of a Presbyterian, the last got the better. And having set his Hands to his Sides, he cryed out with great Vehemence God damn my Soul then. (p. 21.)

John Maclaurin's story had, in those days, many counterparts south of the Border in which the profound antipathy of Presbyterians for Anglicans was similarly caricatured : and it is this general atmosphere that explains the astonishing fact that, while in the 1750's the proportion of pamphlets in favour of Gillespie was about 10 in favour for every one against, in the late 1770's and the early 1780's, the proportion of pamphlets was the other way round, 10 repudiating Gillespie's principles for every one saying a word in their favour. There were, of course, doughty defenders of the Relief position from within the Synod itself, the caustic pen of James Baine of Edinburgh being reinforced by the profound thinking and lucid expositions of Patrick Hutchison of St. Ninians.

III.

So I come now to what was intended to be the longest part of this paper —as it is the most important. What was the distinctive principle of the Relief Church, which aroused such overwhelming opposition ? Stated in its most familiar form it precedes the formation of the Presbytery. Before the very first celebration of the Lord's Supper after his deposition T. Gillespie said, " I hold communion with all that visibly hold the Head, and with such only," and he instructed his elders, in distributing the tokens, to have regard to that principle alone.

In days when tokens were being refused in congregations of the Church of Scotland to those who had worshipped in a Secession meeting house or an Episcopal chapel, or listened to a Cameronian either in an open-air service or a cottage meeting ; when anti-Burgher Kirk Sessions were refusing them to those who had, within recent years, entered a Parish Church, or even a Burgher Meeting-house, and the Reformed Presbytery to all who had not sworn the Covenants in their entirety, it is no wonder that this declaration was regarded as a complete subversion of Presbyterian discipline. It is no wonder that in many a manse study, pens were put to tirades which, meant for the publisher, often got no further than the pulpit. The Relievers were lax, latitudinarian, Methodistic, undiscriminating, traitors to the sound practice and high traditions of the Kirk. They were undermining the religion of Scotland by creating in men's minds an uncertainty as to what was truth. Many of them turned to the Book of Ezekiel, and quoted the Lord's charge to the prophet, " Shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof : and the goings out thereof and the comings in thereof ; and *all* the forms thereof, and *all* the ordinances

thereof; and *all* the forms thereof, and *all* the laws thereof: and write it in their sight; that they may keep the *whole* form thereof, and *all* the ordinances thereof, and do them." (Ezekiel 43: 11.)

And in view of the doctrine of exclusive divine right still prevailing, each church was convinced that it had the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; and since God was not the author of confession, therefore, as one pamphlet puts it.

"As no man can join in the communion of *any church*, unless he approve of her profession in every concernment thereof: so *that church* cannot lawfully hold communion with him upon easier terms, than his professed subjection to ALL the truths and ordinances of Christ, which *she* has agreed to receive and to hold."

Faced with a barrage of criticism and abuse, Gillespie stood stoutly and stubbornly by his first pronouncement. And there can be no doubt that he could have whole-heartedly approved of the formulation that Patrick Hutchison gave it about the time of Gillespie's death: "It is a mean, unworthy prostitution of the most solemn ordinance of our religion to call it the table of a party. It is the Lord's Table. For whom is this table covered by the generous entertainer? Is it covered for Burghers, or anti-Burghers? for Church people or Relief people? for Independents or Episcopalians as such? No. For whom then? For the children of God, not as they belong to any particular denomination of professors, but as they are his children, in reality, and appear to be so by their deportment. It is the most daring presumption in *any* to deny the *children's bread* to the *children of God.*"

It would be misleading, however, to represent the development of the Relief Church as a peaceful and orderly progression towards a fuller understanding of its original principles. Some ministers, recruited from Secession or Church of Scotland sources, brought with them a certain reluctance to carry these principles to the full extent. They were willing to go the length of an open table for all the sections of the Presbyterian fold, but not for malignants and sectaries. When the Presbytery of Relief divided into two, it was not so much geography that determined the limits of East and West, as ecclesiastical affinities. Largo, e.g., was in the Presbytery of the East, while neighbouring Colinsburgh was in that of the West. Both the Church of Scotland and the Seceders rejoiced in this quite evident disagreement, and saw in it the beginnings of a definite schism in the Relief body. To clear up the situation, it was resolved that the Presbyteries should come together and form a Synod. It was preceded by a consultative meeting, in 1772, which proved distinctly stormy, with decisions come to by a majority vote. But the first meeting of Synod, a year later, gave its

approval to this resolution " With respect to the overture concerning ministerial and Christian communion, the Synod were *unanimously* of opinion that it is agreeable to the word of God and their principles occasionally to hold communion with those of the Episcopal and Independent persuasion who are visible saints." Cruden of Glasgow and Cowan of Colinsburgh can only have concurred in this resolution by putting their own interpretation on the word " occasionally," for both went back to stir up their congregations to rebel against the Synod and " their monstrous classing of Presbytery, Episcopacy and Independency." Both failed, and before long, sought and found other fields of labour outwith the Synod. From 1774, therefore, the year of Gillespie's death, there was a full and complete acceptance of the principle of open communion as he had first asserted it. But it continued in the other bodies to be everywhere spoken against and repudiated with acrimonious words. The most bitter opponents were the various branches of the Secession, which, within two generations, were to unite with them to form the United Presbyterian Church. It was the memory of this conflict that was to create the most difficult problem in the union negotiations. From the frank discussions, there finally emerged article VI of the Basis of Union " That with regard to those Ministers and Sessions who may think that the second section of the 26th chapter of the Confession of Faith authorises free communion—that is, not loose or indiscriminate communion, but the occasional admission to fellowship in the Lord's Supper, of persons respecting whose Christian character satisfactory evidence has been obtained, though belonging to other religious denominations—they shall enjoy in the united body what they enjoyed in their separate communions—the right of acting on their conscientious convictions."

In the Basis of Union of 1929 this earlier basis of union is named as a historic document, " the general principles whereof are held to be conserved in the united Church." And, finally, in this connection—to quote from a document less official—the Book of Common Order, its Alternative order of Holy Communion says that the minister before the Communion, *may* say " The Table of our Lord Jesus Christ is open to all who are in communion with the Church Universal. We therefore invite members of any branch thereof who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to join with us in this holy fellowship."

What led to the preparation of this paper was hearing, shortly after the Assembly of 1959, in a pre-Union Church of Scotland, a minister of Secession stock, precede his celebration of communion, with a variation of this permitted intimation. He did it with a smugness that suggested that we were much more Christian than our neighbouring Church across the Border, and that the whole ethos of the Church of Scotland was, and

had always been, much more hospitable than that of the Church of England. I wanted to say to him, " My dear sir, do you not know that 200 years ago the boot was on the other foot. That all the branches of the Church in Scotland, especially the Secession, had fenced the table with such an impassable barrier, that no member of any other Church, especially a non-Presbyterian church, could hope to approach. Whereas the Church of England, in no welcoming mood perhaps, had, in virtue of the Test and Corporation Acts, perforce to admit to the Altar all who were desirous to qualify themselves for any public office, municipal and national."

We welcome the complete change that has come over Scotland, and give thanks for Thomas Gillespie who, amid caricature and obloquy held fast to his principle that made the first breach in the wall of Presbyterian exclusiveness and we welcome in part the complete change in the Church of England, for it meant that, with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (which she resisted bitterly), the Church of England gained control of the access to her altars, while lamenting the fact that intoxicated by her new liberties many of her clergy developed an exclusiveness which rivals that of our own forefathers two centuries ago. What the Anglican communion needs today is a Thomas Gillespie, from within her own bounds.

It may have already found one, for I have heard from the United States, that the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California has been declaring that he can see no reason for barring members of other Protestant denominations from the altar. And it may be that his variation of Thomas Gillespie's words, will prove as epoch making as the original—they are " The Heavenly Banquet is not for Episcopalians alone."?